

EPA Environmental Justice

Fact Sheet

National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC)

UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY

President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 on February 11, 1994 to establish environmental justice as a national priority. The Order, entitled "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," focuses federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions of minority populations and low-income populations with the goal of achieving environmental protection for all communities.

In 1993, Administrator Carol Browner made environmental justice an EPA priority. She stated that "many people of color, low-income and Native American communities have raised concerns that they suffer a disproportionate burden of health consequences due to the siting of industrial plants and waste dumps, and from exposure to pesticides or other toxic chemicals at home and on the job and that environmental programs do not adequately address these disproportionate exposures...EPA is committed to addressing these concerns and is assuming a leadership role in environmental justice to enhance environmental quality for all residents of the United States."

In 2001, Administrator Christine Todd Whitman confirmed that, "environmental justice is the goal to be achieved for all communities and persons across this Nation. Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn and work."

ESTABLISHING AN INFRASTRUCTURE

In 1992, in response to public concerns, the EPA created an Office of Environmental Justice and implemented a new organizational infrastructure to integrate environmental justice into EPA's policies, programs, and activities. An **Environmental Justice Steering Committee** was created made up of senior managers representing headquarters offices and regions. It provides leadership and direction on ensure that environmental justice is incorporated into the agency programs. There is also an **Environmental Justice Coordinators Council** which serves as the frontline staff specifically responsible for ensuring policy input, program development, and implementation of environmental justice throughout the Agency. This infrastructure ensures a clear commitment from EPA's senior management to all personnel that environmental justice is a priority.

OBTAINING STAKEHOLDER ADVICE - NEJAC

The NEJAC was established September 30, 1993. The Council is chartered in two year increments. The Council meets once each year and provides a forum focusing on human health and environmental conditions of minority populations and low-income populations that impact community members, nonprofit organizations, industry, academia environmental organizations, tribal members, and state and local government groups. Careful consideration is given to the appointment of each member to ensure that every point of view is represented. It is essential that such a dialogue occur. The functions of this Council cannot be performed within the Agency.

The issues around environmental justice are complex and extremely emotional, making it difficult for impacted communities to express their concerns on major public policy issues. The NEJAC provides an

environment for all parties to explain the situation while EPA can serve as the entity that receives advice and recommendations from all affected groups. The NEJAC provides this valuable forum for integrating environmental justice with other EPA priorities and initiatives.

The NEJAC Executive Council consists of 26 members appointed from key environmental justice constituencies, which include community-based groups; business and industry; academic and educational institutions; state and local governments; tribal governments; non-governmental organizations; and environmental groups. The NEJAC also has seven subcommittees to help develop strategic options for EPA. These subcommittees report to the NEJAC Executive Council. Each subcommittee consists of approximately 8 - 12 individuals knowledgeable in the subject area, from the NEJAC Executive Council as well as from other stakeholder organizations. These are: **Air and Water; Enforcement; Health and Research; Indigenous Peoples; International; Puerto Rico; and Waste and Facility Siting.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the 1993-96 period, the NEJAC produced a number of products and provided consensus advice to help the Agency focus its environmental justice agenda. For example, the initial draft of EPA's Environmental Justice Strategy required by Executive Order 12898 was reviewed and substantive recommendations made; the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's Facility Siting Criteria document was reviewed; the Model Plan for Public Participation was published and distributed widely; and a public forum protocol was developed and subsequently used as the model for the first Interagency Public Meeting on Environmental Justice (Atlanta, 1/19/95).

During the 1997-99 period, the first NEJAC/EPA Enforcement Roundtable in San Antonio was held; the US-Mexico Border XXI program proposal was reviewed; the Agency's enforcement and compliance work plan was commented on; and public dialogues were conducted in five major cities concerning possible solutions to urban crises resulting from loss of economic opportunities caused by pollution and relocation of businesses. In an effort to provide guidance to EPA regarding issues related to international environmental justice, the first Roundtable on Environmental Justice on the U.S./Mexico Border was held August 19-21, 1999 in National City, California. The objectives of the Roundtable were to define and trace the evolution of the national and international environmental justice issues; identify environmental justice issues on the border; provide an overview of current border programs and explore ways to address concerns; develop environmental justice border policies and identify existing enforcement and cleanup processes.

During the 1999 - 2002 period, the first NEJAC meeting to focus on the specific issue regarding environmental justice and permitting was held (December 1999). Subsequently, four other policy issue meetings have been held on community health and environmental exposure (May 2000), on the integration of environmental justice in federal agency programs (December 2000), on fish consumption, water quality and environmental justice issues (December 2001), and on advancing environmental justice through pollution prevention (December 2002). Each policy meeting results in a report and recommendations to the EPA Administrator.

MEETING DATES AND LOCATION

When funds permit, meetings are held at different locations to ensure that local concerns can be expressed in the open forum provided by the NEJAC. The first meeting was held May 20, 1994 in Washington, D.C., followed by meetings in Albuquerque, NM, August 3-5, 1994; Herndon, VA, October 25-27, 1994; Atlanta, GA, January 17-19, 1995; Washington, DC, July 25-27, 1995; Washington, DC, December 12-14, 1995; Detroit, MI, May 29-31, 1996; Baltimore, MD, December 10-12, 1996; Wabeno, Wisconsin, May 13-15, 1997; Durham, NC, December 8-10, 1997 which was followed by the Enforcement Round December 11-13, 1997; a special business meeting of the Executive Council of NEJAC, Arlington, VA, February 23-24, 1998; a general session in Oakland, CA, May 31 - June 3, 1998; a general session in Baton Rouge, LA, December 7-10, 1998; a policy issue meeting in Washington, DC, November 30 -December 2, 1999; a policy issue meeting in Atlanta, GA, May 23-26, 2000 a policy issue meeting in Arlington, VA, December 11-14-2000; a facilitated dialogue meeting in Washington, D.C., August 8-10, 2001; a policy issue meeting in Seattle, WA, December 3-6, 2001; and a policy issue meeting in Baltimore, MD, December 9-12, 2002. The next meeting will be held in the following location:

Date: April 13-16, 2004

Where: Sheraton New Orleans
500 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA

Focus: Cumulative
Impacts/Cumulative
Risks and
Environmental Justice

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Executive Order provided for agencies to hold public meetings to receive comments, questions, and recommendations regarding environmental justice issues. NEJAC has restructured its meetings from addressing site specific issues to addressing National policy issues. In recent meetings the following issues have been discussed:

- **December 1999, Washington, DC-** What factors should be considered by a federal agency, as well as state or local agencies with delegated permitting authority in the decision making process prior to allowing a new facility to operate in a community that already may have a number of such facilities?
- **May 23-26, 2000, Atlanta, GA** - Is there a direct correlation between the environment and the public health problems of the resident of communities that are located in close proximity to multiple pollution-generating facilities?
- **December 11-14, 2000, Washington, DC-** How have the Federal agencies succeeded in integrating environmental justice into their programs, operations, policies, and activities pursuant to Executive Order 12898?
- **December 3-6, 2001, Seattle, WA** - How should the EPA improve the quality, quantity, and integrity of our Nation's aquatic ecosystems in order to protect the health and safety of people consuming or using fish, aquatic plants, and wildlife?
- **December 9-12, 2002, Baltimore, MD** - How can EPA promote innovation in the field of pollution prevention, waste minimization, and related areas to more effectively ensure a clean environment and quality of life for all peoples, including low-income, minority and tribal communities?

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Each NEJAC meeting has the minimum of two hours for members of the public to register and make statements before the full NEJAC. The comments are recorded and maintained as a part of the public record of each meeting. Each meeting record is available to the public in Room

2224 South Oval, Ariel Rios Building, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20004. In some cases hard copies are available. Call the OEJ Information Line on 1-800-962-6215.

RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

The Federal Advisory Committee Act requires that a committee be re-chartered every two years and that membership be rotated to provide the widest participation possible by the greatest number of stakeholders. To receive the most up-to-date information about the NEJAC, contact our web site noted below.

MEMBERSHIP OF NEJAC

The membership is rotated to provide the greatest possible opportunity for a variety of individuals to serve on NEJAC. To ensure that all views are represented, membership comprises a balanced representation of the following groups:

Academia, Community Groups, Environmental Organizations, State or Local Governments, Tribal Governments, Non-Government Organizations, and Industry.

NEJAC KEY CONTACTS

Ms. Veronica Eady, Chair	NEJAC
Mr. Kenneth Manaster, Vice Chair	Air & Water Subcommittee
Mr. Kenneth Warren Act.Chair	Enforcement Subcommittee
Ms. Pamela Kingfisher, Vice Chair	Health and Research Subcommittee
Mr. Terry Williams, Acting Chair	Indigenous Peoples Subcommittee
Mr. Tseming Yang, Chair	International Subcommittee
Mr. Michael Lythcott, Act.Vice Ch.	Waste and Facility Siting Sub.
Dr. Graciela Ramirez, Chair	Puerto Rico Subcommittee

For Specific Information, Call the Designated Federal Official (DFO) Named Below

SUBCOMMITTEE	DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL
NEJAC	Mr. Charles Lee - 202-564-2597
Air & Water	Mr. Wil Wilson - 202-564-1954
	Ms. Alice Walker - 202-260-1919
Enforcement	Ms. Shirley Pate - 202-564-2607
Health & Research	Ms. Sam Williams - 202-564-6781
	Mr. Gary Carroll - 202-564-0518
Indigenous People	Mr. Danny Gogal - 202-564-2576
International	Ms. Wendy Graham - 202-564-6602
Waste & Facility Siting	Mr. Kent Benjamin - 202-566-0185

INTERNET ACCESS

Information about the NEJAC is available on the Internet by entering: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice>. You will be prompted to select a variety of options for information about NEJAC. You will be given an opportunity to add your name to the Office of Environmental Justice's mailing list and be able to "link" to other sites of interest.

MEETING SUMMARIES

A meeting synopsis of each meeting is available off the Internet. You can also visit the NEJAC web site to stay up to date on all activities or by calling the toll-free number below:

CALL 1-800-962-6215
